

VZCZCXRO5082

RR RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA  
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHNP RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSK RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHVK  
RUEHYG  
DE RUEHPG #0549 2571452  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 141452Z SEP 09  
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1754  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS PRAGUE 000549

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

CA/VO FOR BGREWE, EUR/CE FOR JBERGEMANN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CMGT](#) [CVIS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EZ](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH MFA STATEMENT EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER  
PROPOSED ESTA FEES

REF: BEAM-GREWE E-MAIL DATED 9/10/2009

11. (U) On September 10 the Czech MFA issued a statement (see para 3) regarding the September 9 vote in the U.S. Senate on the Travel Promotion Act which proposes the establishment of a fee for ESTA applications. In addition to commenting on the ESTA fee, the statement also references the Canadian reimposition of visas for Czechs.

12. (SBU) During separate meetings with MFA officials on September 9, Czech Common and Foreign Security Policy Department Director Jaroslav Kurfurst and Americas' Department officers Marketa Balkova and Katerina Kulhankova all expressed concern about this pending legislation. Kurfurst stated that the Czech Republic hopes that this fee for ESTA applications will not come to pass and he noted that many of his counterparts in European member states feel the same way. He inquired as to whether the State Department has, or would, speak to the U.S. Congress to express concern on behalf of foreign governments about this act. He noted that if this act is designed to generate money in order for the U.S. to promote tourism, he anticipates it will do exactly the opposite. He stated that many people will react negatively to this fee, which they will view as a visa fee under a different name, and he anticipates that some Czechs may even opt not to travel to the U.S. because of this. While acknowledging that the great majority of travelers to the U.S. (especially business travelers) will likely grumble but pay the fee, he stated that this will nonetheless strain transatlantic relations and generate resentment on behalf of travelers to the U.S. Balkova and Kulhankova echoed these sentiments. Czech press has reported on the Senate vote and many people have publicly raised questions about how this fee will be collected and what measures the USG will enact to protect any financial data requested over the internet.

13. (U) Begin text of Czech MFA Statement:  
The Statement of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the ESTA Fee

First and foremost it is important to mention that the implementation of the fee on the U.S. side has not yet been finalized.

The MFA of the Czech Republic is working on this issue, especially in coordination with its partners from the EU and in the cooperation with the European Commission. We are intensively communicating with the Commission already about the possibilities and steps which would lead to canceling the visa requirements for citizens of the Czech Republic by Canada.  
End text.  
Thompson-Jones